

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Bureau of Land Management**

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**Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Amendments  
to the Casper Resource Management Plan and Thunder Basin National Grasslands  
Land and Resource Management Plan, Converse County, WY**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior and United States Forest Service,  
Agriculture.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), and the Resources Planning Act of 1974 as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Casper Field Office (CFO) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) Douglas Ranger District (DRD) of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grasslands (MBRTB) intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Converse County Oil and Gas Project (CCOGP), which may include land use plan amendments to the Casper Resource Management Plan (RMP) as well as the Thunder Basin National Grassland Land Resource Management Plan (TBNG LRMP), and by this notice is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public

comments and identify issues. The BLM is the lead agency for the EIS and the USFS is participating as a cooperating agency.

**DATES:** This notice initiates the public scoping process for the EIS and land use plan amendments. Comments on issues may be submitted in writing until (INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION DATE). The date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance through the local news media, newspapers and the BLM web site at [http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field\\_offices/Casper.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field_offices/Casper.html). In order to be addressed in the Draft EIS, all comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. Additional opportunities for public participation will be provided upon publication of the Draft EIS.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- Website: [www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field\\_offices/Casper.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field_offices/Casper.html)
- Email: [blm\\_wy\\_casper\\_wymail@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wy_casper_wymail@blm.gov)
- Fax: 307-261-7587
- Mail: Converse County Oil and Gas Project, BLM Casper Field Office, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604

Documents pertinent to this proposal are available for public review at the BLM Casper Field Office or the USFS Douglas Ranger District Office, 2250 E. Richards St., Douglas, WY.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information and/or to have your name added to our mailing list, contact Kathleen Lacko, Assistant Field Manager, telephone: 307-261-7530; address: 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY

82604; email: blm\_wy\_casper\_wymail@blm.gov. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This document provides notice that the BLM CFO and USFS MBRTB intend to prepare an EIS to support decision-making regarding the proposed Converse County Oil and Gas Project, begin the public scoping period, and seek input on the preliminary issues identified with respect to this Project. In addition, BLM authorization of this proposed project may require amendments of the 2007 Casper RMP or the 2001 TBNG LRMP because impacts will likely exceed the analysis prepared under the existing plans for surface disturbance, wildlife, cultural resources, air quality and water quality. By this notice, the BLM is complying with requirements in 43 CFR 1610.2(c) to notify the public of proposed amendments to a land use plan, predicated on the findings of the EIS, and to seek public input on preliminary planning issues. If land use plan amendments are necessary, the BLM and USFS will integrate the land use planning processes with the NEPA process for this project.

The proposed development project area is located in Converse County and encompasses approximately 1.5 million acres of land, of which approximately 88,000 surface acres (6 percent of the project area) and 965,000 mineral acres (64 percent of the project area) are public lands administered by the BLM CFO while the USFS MBRTB manages approximately 64,000 acres of surface (4 percent of the project area) within the project

area. The remainder of the project area consists of State of Wyoming (7 percent) and private ownership (83 percent).

The proponent companies propose to develop approximately 5,000 oil and natural gas wells on 1,500 new multi-well pads within the proposed Converse County Oil and Gas Project area over a ten year period. The companies propose to develop the project area using directional, vertical, horizontal and other drilling techniques, as well as to develop infrastructure to support oil and gas production in the project area including: well pads, roads, pipelines, power lines, compressor and electrical substations, and ancillary facilities such as water supply wells and water disposal facilities. The project proponents have requested exception to multiple timing limitation restrictions which serve to protect several wildlife species in an effort to drill year-round.

Surface disturbance associated with the Converse County Oil and Gas Project proposal is estimated to include 50,000 acres of initial surface disturbance for the construction of new roads, well pads, pipelines and associated facilities, of which approximately 20,000 acres could remain for the life of the project.

The BLM and USFS will evaluate any authorizations and actions within the respective office's administrative area that are proposed in the EIS to determine if they conform to the decisions in the 2007 Casper RMP or 2001 TBNG LRMP. Prior to that approval, any proposed actions that would result in a change in the scope of resource uses, terms and conditions, and decisions of the Casper RMP or the TBNG LRMP would require amendment of the RMP or LRMP. If the BLM or USFS determines that a plan amendment is necessary, the analysis necessary for the RMP or LRMP amendment(s)

would occur simultaneously with preparation of the CCOGP EIS. The preliminary planning criteria would include:

- The RMP and LRMP amendments will comply with NEPA, FLPMA, NFMA and other applicable laws, executive orders, regulations and policy;
- The RMP and LRMP amendments will recognize valid existing rights;
- Lands addressed in the RMP and LRMP amendments will be public lands (including split estate lands) managed by the BLM and National Forest System lands managed by the USFS, respectively. Any decisions in the RMP and LRMP amendments will apply only to Federal lands administered by either the BLM or the USFS.
- A collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach will be used, where possible, to jointly determine the desired future condition and management direction for the public lands. To the extent possible and within legal and regulatory parameters, the BLM and USFS planning and management decisions will complement the planning and management decisions of other agencies, State and local governments with jurisdictions intermingled with, and adjacent to, the planning area.

To provide the public with an opportunity to review the proposed project and the project information, as well as the proposed plan amendments, the BLM will host meetings in Casper, Douglas and Glenrock within 45 days of the publication of this notice. The BLM will notify the public of meetings and any other opportunities for the public to be involved in the environmental review for this proposal at least 15 days prior to the event.

Meeting dates, locations and times will be announced by a news release to the media, individual mailings and postings on the project web site.

The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and guide the process for developing the EIS. At present, the BLM and USFS have identified the following preliminary issues: Potential effects to air quality, historic trails, socioeconomic, vegetation, water resources and wildlife habitat including Greater Sage-Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse Core Habitat Areas.

The BLM and USFS will utilize and coordinate the NEPA commenting process to help fulfill the public involvement process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C. 470f) as provided for in 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM and USFS in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA. Native American tribal consultations will be conducted in accordance with policy, and tribal concerns will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with other stakeholders that may be interested or affected by the BLM's or USFS's decisions on this project, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate as a cooperating agency.

The Forest Service will be operating under the new Part 218 – Project-level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (hereinafter referred to as 'objection'), 36 C.F.R. 218 Subparts A and B, for this project. Per these regulations, individuals and entities who submit timely, specific written comments regarding a proposed project or

activity during any designated opportunity for public comment will have standing to file an objection. This includes requests for comments during this initial scoping period as well as comments submitted during the 45-day comment period for the Draft EIS.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of established comment periods. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments will have eligibility (36 CFR 218.5) to file an objection under 36 CFR 218.8. For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments must either sign the comment or verify identity upon request. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements in §218.25(a)(3).

Before including your address, phone number, email address or other personal-identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7, 43 CFR 1610.2)

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Larry Claypool  
Acting State Director

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Date

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Phil Cruz  
Forest Supervisor

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Date